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103D CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 253

To authorize the garnishment of Federal employees' pay, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 28 (legislative day, JANUARY 5), 1993

Mr. CRAIG (for himself, Mr. PRYOR, and Mr. ROTH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs

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A BILL

To authorize the garnishment of Federal employees' pay, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Garnishment Equalization Act of 1993".

SEC. 2. GARNISHMENT OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' PAY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 55 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

"§ 5520a. Garnishment of pay

"(a) For purposes of this section—

"(1) 'agency' means each agency of the Federal Government, including—

"(A) an executive agency, except for the General Accounting Office;

"(B) the United States Postal Service and the Postal Rate Commission;

"(C) any agency of the judicial branch of the Government; and

"(D) any agency of the legislative branch of the Government, including the General Accounting Office, each office of a Member of Congress, a committee of the Congress, or other office of the Congress;

"(2) 'employee' means an employee of an agency or member of the uniformed services as defined under section 2101(3);

"(3) 'legal process' means any writ, order, summons, or other similar process in the nature of garnishment, that—

"(A) is issued by a court of competent jurisdiction within any State, territory, or possession of the United States, or an authorized official pursuant to an order of such a court or pursuant to State or local law; and

"(B) orders the employing agency of such employee to withhold an amount from the pay of such employee, and make a payment of such withholding to another person, for a specifically described satisfaction of a legal debt of the employee, or recovery of attorney's fees, interest, or court costs; and

"(4) 'pay' means—

"(A) basic pay, premium pay paid under subchapter V, any payment received under subchapter VI, VII, or VIII, severance and back pay paid under subchapter IX, sick pay, incentive pay, and any other compensation paid or payable for personal services, whether such compensation is denominated as wages, salary, commission, bonus pay or otherwise; and

"(B) does not include awards for making suggestions.

"(b) Subject to the provisions of this section and the provisions of section 303 of the Consumer Credit Protection Act (15 U.S.C. 1673) pay from an agency to an employee is subject to legal process in the same manner and to the same extent as if the agency were a private person.

"(c)(1) Service of legal process to which an agency is subject under this section may be accomplished by cer-

tified or registered mail, return receipt requested, or by personal service, upon—

"(A) the appropriate agent designated for receipt of such service of process pursuant to the regulations issued under this section; or

"(B) the head of such agency, if no agent has been so designated.

"(2) Such legal process shall be accompanied by sufficient information to permit prompt identification of the employee and the payments involved.

"(d) Whenever any person, who is designated by law or regulation to accept service of process to which an agency is subject under this section, is effectively served with any such process or with interrogatories, such person shall respond thereto within thirty days (or within such longer period as may be prescribed by applicable State law) after the date effective service thereof is made, and shall, as soon as possible but not later than fifteen days after the date effective service is made, send written notice that such process has been so served (together with a copy thereof) to the affected employee at his or her duty station or last-known home address.

"(e) No employee whose duties include responding to interrogatories pursuant to requirements imposed by this section shall be subject to any disciplinary action or civil

or criminal liability or penalty for, or on account of, any disclosure of information made by such employee in connection with the carrying out of any of such employee's duties which pertain directly or indirectly to the answering of any such interrogatory.

"(f) Agencies affected by legal process under this section shall not be required to vary their normal pay and disbursement cycles in order to comply with any such legal process.

"(g) Neither the United States, an agency, nor any disbursing officer shall be liable with respect to any payment made from payments due or payable to an employee pursuant to legal process regular on its face, provided such payment is made in accordance with this section and the regulations issued to carry out this section.

"(h)(1) Subject to the provisions of paragraph (2), if an agency is served under this section with more than one legal process with respect to the same payments due or payable to an employee, then such payments shall be available, subject to section 303 of the Consumer Credit Protection Act (15 U.S.C. 1673), to satisfy such processes in priority based on the time of service, with any such process being satisfied out of such amounts as remain after satisfaction of all such processes which have been previously served.

"(2) A legal process to which an agency is subject under sections 459, 461, and 462 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 659, 661, and 662) for the enforcement of the employee's legal obligation to provide child support or make alimony payments, shall have priority over any legal process to which an agency is subject under this section.

"(i) The provisions of this section shall not modify or supersede the provisions of sections 459, 461, and 462 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 659, 661, and 662) concerning legal process brought for the enforcement of an individual's legal obligations to provide child support or make alimony payments.

"(j)(1) Regulations implementing the provisions of this section shall be promulgated—

"(A) by the President or his designee for each executive agency, except—

"(i) with regard to members of the armed forces as defined under section 2101, the President or, at his discretion, the Secretary of Defense shall promulgate such regulations; and

"(ii) with regard to employees of the United States Postal Service, the President or, at his discretion, the Postmaster General shall promulgate such regulations;

"(B) jointly by the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, or their designee, for the legislative branch of the Government; and

"(C) by the Chief Justice of the United States or his designee for the judicial branch of the Government.

"(2) Such regulations shall provide that an agency's administrative costs in executing a garnishment action may be added to the garnishment, and that the agency may retain costs recovered as offsetting collections.".

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) The table of chapters for chapter 55 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 5520 the following:

"5520a. Garnishment of pay.".

(2) Section 410(b) of title 39, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by redesignating the second paragraph (9) (relating to the Inspector General Act of 1978) as paragraph (10); and

(B) by adding at the end thereof the following new paragraph:

"(11) section 5520a of title 5.".

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SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by this Act shall take effect 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

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